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## Resource Control and the Rise of Militia in the Nigerian Delta Region

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**Abstract:** *The struggle for resource control in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria has been energized following decades of total neglect of the oil producing region. Since oil in this region contributes substantially to the nation's economy, many would have expected that the cow that produces the milk will be well fed. Nonetheless, the region is poorly neglected in terms of infrastructural development, environmental protection, and worst of all, human development. This analysis examines why the non-state actors want the control of oil resources in the Niger Delta region, how the conflicting parties have pursued their demands, the effect of the conflicts on the region, Nigeria, and the international community. In sum, the analysis concludes with some policy recommendations for solving the conflict.*

**Keywords:** Resource control, Niger Delta crisis, conflict resolution, multinational corporations, militant groups

### Introduction

The struggle for resource control in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria has been energized following decades of total neglect of the oil producing region. Since oil in this region contributes substantially to nation's economy, many would have expected that the cow that produces the milk will be well fed. The region is poorly neglected when it comes to infrastructural development, environmental protection, and worst of all, human development. The control of oil, its operations, and the management of revenue accruing from it are exclusively in the hands of the Nigerian government.

Nigeria is the tenth largest producer of oil in the world (CIA 2010). The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) assigned more than two million barrels of oil production quota per day to the country. The Niger Delta region of Nigeria located in both South-South and South-East political zones of the country accounts for more than seventy percent of Nigeria's daily total oil production. The Federal Government of Nigeria sitting at Abuja, a distance of more than four hundred miles, controls the oil exploration, and its revenue as enshrined in the Second Schedule Part 1, item 39 of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. There are insufficient schools, hospitals, clean and affordable water supply, and other life improving utilities. Gas flaring has continued unabated. These and many other grievances made the region to agitate for resource control through non-state actors. Negotiations and mediations held at various stages failed mostly because the government and its partners—the multinational oil corporations—used force to suppress the Niger Delta people's demands. Pushed to the wall, the communities changed their demands of being cared for to taking control of their own resources.

If efficiency and even distribution of resources can be best achieved through central control as argued, why then do the regions, Niger Delta included, compete for the control of their own natural resources? Many reasons have been advanced by the concerned parties to

justify their desire to control the resources. In this conflict of resource control, the proliferation of militia groups for various objectives and the subsequent disruption of the economic, political, and socio-cultural activities of the Nigerian nation-state, multinational oil corporations, and indeed the oil bearing communities have become routine occurrence.

Hardly does one hear of news from Nigeria without a mention of criminal destruction of oil installations, by the militia groups, kidnappings for ransom, and oil bunkering. Walker (2008, 2) provides insight into oil bunkering by contending that “in order to get away with the theft, the bunkering syndicates operates under the cloak of the conflict between militants and oil companies in the Niger Delta. They need ‘security’—gangs of armed heavies to protect their cargos—and threaten anyone who tries to interfere.” In 2009, “tens of thousands of militants dumped their guns as part of an official amnesty—an attempt by Nigeria’s government to stabilize oil production and end rampant kidnapping by militant groups” (Duffield 2010, 2). Heightened intra-ethnic and group conflicts, personality conflicts, environmental issues, wanton destruction and demolition of property are among many other issues that have arisen in this militia syndrome. The resource control struggle and the level of disruptions associated with it have often resulted in the question being asked, “Is Black Gold a blessing or curse to areas where it is deposited?”

The purpose of this analysis is to explore why the non-state actors want the control of oil resources in the Niger Delta region, how the conflicting parties have pursued their demands, and the effect of the conflicts in the region, Nigeria, and the international community. We begin the analysis with a review of relevant literature. This is followed by a discussion of the reason for resource control, the rise and formation of militia groups. We conclude with some policy recommendations for solving the conflict.

### **Review of Relevant Literature**

Conflicts can be resolved in any or a combination of the following four ways; litigation, fighting, negotiation, and mediation. The campaigners have sued each other at various judicial levels in Nigeria. Kaniye (2003) is of the view that the Nigerian court system is inundated with more than five hundred pending cases between the resource control disputants. The local, international governmental and non-governmental organizations as well as communities, and individual leaders have been active in negotiating and mediating a way forward in resolving the conflicts. Wars have been fought and are still being fought by the parties involved. While the Nigerian state has used its armed forces and other security establishments to fight against other agitators in the conflicts, oil bearing communities have recruited and armed militia groups. Some other militia groups are said to have been created by oil companies to guard personnel and installations. The communities and community leaders have covertly or overtly been involved in the militia issues for various reasons. Thus a new Somalia has been created in the area. This work is intended to investigate other motivators outside of resource control that increase militia growth.

Militia groups are social phenomena that have passionately been loved and hated by society. All over the world, militia have at certain stages of national history, especially in the era of colonialism and nationalist struggles, played roles that endeared them to the hearts of citizens. Such movements as the Mau Mau in Kenya’s independent struggle, freedom fighters of various geopolitical zones, and indeed patriots on both sides of the American war of independence are some testaments of the societies’ love for militia groups.

On the other hand, the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, the Kashmir Separatist Movement in the Indian-controlled Kashmir, the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) in the United States, and numerous others stand on a fluid love and hate continuum. Loved by members, and sometimes loved and hated by the community, these militias disrupt social activities and yet, engineer social advancement. In this section, effort will be made to review the existing literature on militia movements and their motivations for existing in the troubled Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

### *Militia Movement and its Meaning*

Tarrow (1994, 3-4) defines movements as “collective challenges by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities”—challenges that employ disruptive direct action against elites, authorities, other groups or cultural codes, . . . usually in public places.” This definition captures the characteristics of the militia groups in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The movements challenge the elites within and outside the region, and question the authority of the federal government of Nigeria and others within the component units of the federation. They engage in disruptive direct action against the multinational oil corporations, other ethnic and cultural groups, and other interests that vary with their codes, culture, and interests. The varying definitions of militia movements have added to the different perceptions people have about them.

Goodwin and Jasper (2001, 7) argue that “movements cannot emerge where people are unable, for whatever reason, to associate with one another for political purposes.” But must all movements be formed only for political purposes? A labor movement for example, does not usually form for political objectives but for labor-related aims like wage negotiation, and improved working conditions. While some Niger Delta militia groups are founded on political ground, others are established for environmental activism, a few others are created for criminal activities.

The term militia was coined out of a Latin word, miles. It means “soldiers” or “fighters.” We understand that soldiers are the legal security apparatus of a nation-state. This is where the legal status of militia comes from. Rebel movements can claim legitimacy based on the course they pursue and prefer to be called “patriots” rather than rebels. The Niger Delta Peoples Defense Force, one of the fearsome militia in the region, claims legitimacy based on its claimed mission of defending the people and environment. When they unleash terror, as they often do, in the society, the society demonizes them. Watts (2004) contends that crisis is the norm in the region because some states and their local governments cannot contain the militia groups and their activities.

Freilich, Pienik, and Howard (2001) explain that the United States militias are usually seen as dangerous and unwanted groups that deserve to be monitored and controlled. They further opined that the danger associated with these groups is heightened by the people’s perception of them. A working definition of militia groups in this analysis is that they are various armed groups that engage in disruptive behaviors in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria. We would deploy Freilich and his colleagues’ (2001) five analytic categories, such as ideology, motivation, mobilization, organization, and ritual to explain the objectives of the militia groups in the Niger Delta of Nigeria.

Ideology: Since militia groups oppose the value or belief system of the society in which they operate, the various militias in the Niger Delta follow numerous ideologies. They

are very fluid and change constantly to any political, economic, or socio-cultural value system that appeals to them or help them in the pursuit of their course. Asuni (2009, 3) reminds us that MEND “is a constantly changing mass of groups, some of them criminally motivated, others politically and ideologically driven.” Similarly, Hoover and Johnson’s (2004, 90-91) postulation is that “What is already a contentious, racially divided society became even more so with secular developments in advanced capitalism.” While the Niger Deltans are not divided on the extreme spectrum of capitalism and socialism, they are affected by the interplay of capital exploitation of the multinational oil corporations and the fluid Nigerian social-welfare state. It is very informative to note that the Niger Delta area is home to many Nigerian ethnic minority groups.

**Motivation:** some scholars argue that the emergence of militia groups is due to the strains in social structure that leave significant portions of the populous susceptible to anxiety, confusion, and anomie (Bell 1962; Gusfield 1963; and Lipset and Raab 1970). We think people who may not have a voice in the discussion of their affairs, or felt left out in the scheme of things, are profoundly confused. In the state of their confusion, anxiety sets in as they try to wonder what the future holds for them given their situation. Those who see themselves as victims of marginalization or exclusion usually are therefore motivated to band together to oppose or disrupt the perceived society that marginalize or exclude them. Some of the Niger Delta militia groups are aptly motivated by the social strains in the Nigerian society. Their motivations have been economic, political, and socio-cultural situations in their region.

**Mobilization:** Tarrow (1994, 17-18), in his defense of the political opportunity thesis argument writes “that people join social movements in response to political opportunities and then, through collective action, create new ones. As a result, the ‘when’ of social movement mobilization—when political opportunities are opening up—goes a long way towards explaining its ‘why’ ... Even groups with mild grievances and few internal resources may appear in movement.” Indeed, the militia groups in the Niger Delta of Nigeria have been courted by the political class to help them win political power. Odili (2006) suggests that the Niger Deltans may not be aggressive because the crisis was indirectly created in 1999 by politicians in pursuit of their personal objectives. These objectives include winning political power and exercising total control of the state. Youths who are the active members of the militia groups created by the genrocratic political class are recruited into the so-called Youth Wing of the political parties where they are trained as party activists. They are used and abandoned after the elections whether the politicians win or not. Omeje (2004) supports the idea that youths are mobilized for propaganda, violence, and for fraudulent activities. In fact, this shows “that political mobilization is nurtured by discontent. Discontent has no better explanation than the manner in which these youths who form the bedrock of the militia movements are jettisoned as soon as elections are won and lost” (Gamson 1968, 10).

**Organization:** The anti-institutional posture of militia groups is reflected in the way they organize. In the case of the Niger Deltans, they try to distance themselves from the exclusiveness of, corrupt, iron-handed, and highly centralized and regimented Nigerian government. There are more than sixty mainstream and splinter militia groups operating in the Niger Delta today. Harnischfeger (2008, 2) states that “In the Niger Delta, ethnic militias have splintered into rival gangs. Instead of protecting their communities, they fight each other over shares of the oil resources.” Many people follow the conventional organization

structure where hierarchy, power, and functions are established and defined. Yet, there are others that do not have formal organizational structures.

**Ritual:** It is not uncommon for militia groups to ritualize their practices through their mode of dress-sagging pants, hairdo, and armlets/protective charms to convey a sense of belonging, recruitment, special protection, or just to show how powerful the group is. Hobsbawm (1959) provides an explanation of the universal application of rituals by social movements by stating that “All human organizations have their ceremonial or ritual sides, but modern social movements are surprisingly lacking in deliberate contrived ritual. Officially, what binds their members together is content and not form.” Mostly, the aim of militia groups in rituals is to instill fear in the society. The KKK militia, the Red Brigade, the Egbesu Boys, and other notorious gangs or militia have used various rituals to terrorize the various societies where they operate. The Niger Deltans added piety as part of their rituals believing as it is, that the gods through initiation made their bodies impregnable to metals or bullets.

### **Reasons for Resource Control**

Many reasons have been advanced to explain why the Nigerian government and the Niger Deltans struggle for resource control. Progressive nation-states historically thrive on dialectic contradictions in which they work together to resolve their quest for national development. The Nigerian dialectic contradictions have worked in reverse, threatening its stability, viability, and existence as a nation. Omeje’s (2004, 423) contention is that “Nigeria, like a few others in the Third World, thrive on dangerous contradictions that are life threatening and obstructive of social progress and place the life of the state at stake.” One of these contradictions is federalism, which among its tenets is the sharing of powers between the central authority and the relatively autonomous units of the federation. Rather than practice this power sharing arrangement, the federal authority has systematically rendered the federating units powerless and hijacked even the control, management, and sharing of natural resources of the semi-autonomous units in Nigeria.

The various constitutions of Nigeria and decrees promulgated, respectively by the civilian and military governments of the country, have variously concentrated the power to control natural resources at the center. Since the governments of the federating units including the Niger Delta lack sufficient funds, and are deprived of the means to generate their own revenue, the only option open to them is confrontation with the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) for power and resource sharing. The latter compounded this by branding such demand by states as a threat to the security of the nation. So, if the FGN’s interpretation of semi-autonomous units’ demand for a rethink of federalism is a threat, will that mean a different thing or add to the many causes of the conflict for resource control? Omotola’s (2006) postulation is that the state became ‘hard’ in its deployment of force against the society so as to restore order. Indeed, the complexity of the Niger Delta resource conflicts and the different meaning to various forms of resources—power resource, natural resource, and manpower resource—can explain the more than proportional FGN’s response to a possible cause of the conflicts.

Omeje (2004, 430) lists a number of atrocities, including extrajudicial arrest, prolonged detention, torture and killings of innocent citizens and government adversaries as part of federal government’s application of force to the management of the conflicts. He

contends that the result of this tactic exacerbates the conflicts. Why should the Nigerian government use or threaten to use force against the communities and civic organizations? Obi's (1997) answer is that oil revenues account for the bulk of Nigerian foreign revenue and the region happens to be the epicenter of the country's political economic life. In the face of the perceived threats on the central government, it must take steps to defend itself. It therefore becomes incumbent on the state to preserve its sovereignty by using force to protect itself.

Federalism and its practices in Nigeria were seen by some scholars (e.g., Osaghae et al. 2007) for contributing to resource control conflicts. The expanding oil production activity, degradation of land and water by oil pollution and creation of oil-related infrastructure—refineries, fertilizer and petrochemical plants, are all possible causes of resources conflicts. While agreeing in part with Osaghae and his colleagues, we would like to point out that using his approach elicits some questions. The establishment of oil-related infrastructure ought to be a source of income to the federating units and their citizens in the form of employment, taxes, and social development. If we are to accept the view posited by Osage and others, it would then mean that the presence not absence of infrastructure in the Niger Delta of Nigeria is responsible for the violent conflicts ravaging the region and not the often portrayed resource control. But the citizens of the area have not seen or benefitted from the so-called infrastructure.

This contention was observed by Ikelegbe (2001, 437) who states that “paradoxically, the region is one of the poorest, least developed and least reciprocated for its contributions to the national wealth.” Economists argue that industrialization leads to development. Oil-related infrastructure precludes industries, refineries, service or employment agencies, and health clinics. Other scholars agree that the oil producing communities in Nigeria suffer from total neglect and the people wallow in poverty (see Ikelegbe 2001; Omotola 2006; and Watts 2001).

Peluso and Watts (2001) list corruption, bunkering, intra-ethnic, religious, and political factors as responsible for the struggle for resource control. Those engaged in bunkering therefore cannot be champions of resource control for the sake of the people but for their selfish interest or self enrichment. Those who are not getting their desires realized can use the clamor for resource control to pursue those ends.

### **Reasons for the Rise of Militia Groups**

Several possible reasons for the emergence of militia movements in the Niger Delta have been offered. For instance, Omeje (2004) suggests that militia groups emerge because of what he calls “oilification” of all forms of conflicts in Nigeria. The oilification theory, he explains, is the tendency of the Nigerian government to use more than a proportionate force to address anything that seems to threaten oil activities in the country. Oil is a national security issue and subsequently defended with national violence apparatus, the armed forces. The manner in which the forces are used and the effect it leaves in the homes and communities of the region has sent many youths scampering into the bush for their individual and community safety. The *Vanguard Newspaper* (2002, 3) reports on the Odi Massacre reveal that “The rule of engagement of the over 2000 troops that invaded Odi was to shoot inhabitants at sight and at the end of the swift two days operation, some 2,483 civilians were reported killed.”

Watts (2004) disagrees and opines that marginalization and exclusion rather than oilification accounts for the rising number of militia groups in the region. Until the recent circumstance that saw the current President Jonathan Ebele Goodluck from the Niger Delta region emerge as the President of Nigeria, people from that region have played few major roles in the socio-economic and political affairs of Nigeria. Furthermore Frynas (2001) argues that the use of violence by the state and oil companies against anti-oil protesters account for the increasing militarization of the region. He states that “as conflicts between the oil companies and the local people in the Niger Delta escalated, a frequent response to anti-oil protests was the use of repressive security measures” (Fryans 2001, 49) Shell, Mobil, and Chevron, the three examples of the multinational oil corporations that employ violence against the local people, hire police, naval personnel, military campaigns, and other forms of violent suppression in managing the conflicts in the Niger Delta.

### **Discussions on the Motivation for Militia Formation**

Most of the militia groups continue to claim that their movements are fighting for environmental protection. Indeed, the process of oil exploration results in the distortion of the environmental conditions of the area where such activity is carried out. Prior to the late 1950s when commercial oil exploration started in the region, Ogoni land and other Niger Delta areas were covered with green vegetation. Gas flaring, oil spillage, water, and air pollution are among the numerous environmental problems the groups proclaim they want to solve through their militancy. These and other environmental issues are a great concern to the people living in the area as attested by volumes of report and other publications (Ifode 2002; Walker 2008)

We contend that at the formative stage of Niger Delta group movements, environmental protection and social justice were the main motivators for their agitation. The Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), we believe, was motivated by the need to actually tackle their own environmental problems. The movement’s use of non-violent means in its agitation for resource control did not exacerbate the Niger Delta environmental crises as we see today in the blowing up of oil installations. The movements that have emerged or splintered from the MOSOP have been motivated by self interests that run contrary to the environmental protection.

Moreover, the enormity of environmental issues has been stressed by many researchers (e.g., Inokoba and Imbua 2010; Omeje 2004; Watts 2004). How committed are duplicated militia groups to the above objectives? We find that the current militia groups have shifted position from the above course. The blowing up of pipelines and oil rigs do not protect the environment. They exacerbate the environmental pollution and the concomitant effects they have on the ecosystem. Duffield (2010) echoes our point here by agreeing that MEND attacks oil fields. Other scholars support our argument as well that a group or movement lacks morality if it is attacking what it proclaims to protect (e.g., Walker 2008 and Omotola 2006).

The traditional land holding and ownership ideology often referred to as “African socialism” was changed without preparing the natives to adapt to such change. The need to restore local control and ownership of land and other resources removed from the

communities mostly in 1979 through a military decree such as the Land Use Decree of 1978 and the 1979 federal constitution of Nigeria motivate militia formation. Various studies have linked the Nigerian military government's removal of traditional ownership rights of land and other resources from the local communities without adequate compensation to the ongoing unrests in the region (Asuni 2009; Duffield 2010; Olayiwola and Adeleye 2006).

Land and other resources in the traditional Niger Delta community, and indeed most other communities in Africa, confer security—economic, political, and social—on the owners. Mboya (1963, 2) posits that African socialism are “Those proven codes of conduct in the African societies which have, over the ages, conferred dignity on our people and afforded them security regardless of their station in life.” We found that the Nigerian government is constitutionally empowered by both the 1978 Land Use decree and the 1979 constitution to be in full control of land and its resources, including oil. The same constitution requires the government to ensure fair and equitable distribution of the wealth arising from the management of natural resources. There is also a constitutional requirement that the government takes care of the environment and development of the area from which the resources are extracted.

What we observed, which was supported by other researchers, is that the Nigeria government has neglected the Niger Delta area for a long time. The studies conducted by other scholars (see Frynas 2001; Omotola 2006; Pereira 2008; Hazen and Korner 2007) indicate that since the government takeover of natural resources in Nigeria and other countries, those governments have failed to carry out their responsibilities in communities that were traditionally exercising such controls. The takeover or removal of this traditional role from the people has served as a “war cry or a rallying ground” for the militants to band together in order to restore the status quo.

There are other researchers who do not see anything wrong with such removal but are concerned that the Nigerian government has failed to ensure that locals whose rights are taken away from them receive compensation for these rights. Duffield (2010) agrees that the Niger Deltans' demand that government and multinational oil corporations should provide more benefits from the region's oil, with fairer share of the wealth invested in roads, school, hospitals, clean water, and power supply in their region is appropriate. Also previous studies further support our argument that the Nigerian government's inability to provide for the people who have, in obedience to the constitution, surrendered their rights of ownership of natural resources is responsible for the militia groups' agitation for the control of oil resource (see Ikelegbe 2001; Guichaoua 2009; and Omeje 2004).

The most important observation in this analysis is that the militia groups use the clamor for resource control as a *ritual* or smokescreen for their self interest. The self-interests of these militias include, but are not limited to, access to women, easy wealth guaranteed by successful kidnappings, oil bunkering, and drug trafficking. Asuni (2009, 6) concurs with us in her postulation that in some instances the militia abandoned “their goal of promoting social justice and self-empowerment and focused instead on enriching themselves through criminal activity.” The increasing amount of drug trafficking and use in the Niger Delta region, violent attacks on oil facilities, kidnappings for ransom, armed robbery, rape, intimidating neighbors, and gangsterism are some pointers to the criminalization of the noble goals of the early Niger Delta activists.

In a study on how ethnic militias perpetuate in Nigeria, Guichaoua (2009, 23) notes

that forty-five percent of the respondents reported that their expectation for joining a militia was to improve the way they are considered in their neighborhood. Twenty-two percent in the same study expect the new situation to facilitate their access to the opposite sex, indicating that the militia members profit monetarily from their nefarious activities.

Yet, other findings show that the rise of militia groups in the Niger Delta is a function of the Nigerian government's militarization of the area and general insecurity. The region is populated by loose criminal gangs of all sorts such as drug traffickers and users, oil bunkerers, political thugs, street gangs, and many others. A common denominator among most of these groups is the lack of central organization among them. This is a factor that facilitates the duplication of militia groups in the Niger Delta area and helps them to seek their individual interests. Zanini (1999) and Sanderson (2004) in their studies stress that the loose organization of terrorist groups facilitates their tactical independence, partnering with criminal syndicates, and transforming into hybrid criminal/terror entities.

There are illegal weapons flowing into the region and people in the area are exposed to life, economic, and political insecurities. Many people in the area who are faced with the threat of insecurity have started looking for ways to safeguard their live and property against hoodlums and gangs. Maslow (1945) highlights safety or security need as one of the basic necessity of human beings. The Nigerian government on numerous occasions deployed armed services personnel to that area, the 1999 Odi Massacre and continued presence of military and other security agencies in that region are two examples. The use of indiscriminate lethal weapons by local militias (Ojakorotu and Okeke-uzodike 2008), and the easy access to small arms in the Niger Delta area (Hazen and Horner 2009) by the outlaws continue to increase insecurity.

### **The Effects of Resource Control Conflicts**

The effects of the resource control conflicts on the Niger Delta region, Nigeria, and the international community are discussed in this section. These effects are categorized under three conceptual areas: social, economic, and political.

*Social Effects:* The resource control conflicts have actually dislocated the social life and activities of the oil producing areas. Social bonds have been broken especially as rival gangs or militia groups engage each other in battle. The Ijaw Youth Congress and the Isoko National Youth Movement both draw membership from the same area and have fought each other in a fratricidal war. Though they claim to be united in their fight for resource control, their social relationship and unity of purpose as they presently stand are questionable. Nigeria and the region are not better in social relations. Nigeria treats the region as a threat to its economic and national security stability. This is a part of the territorial authority of country, and ought to be treated not as an enemy territory. Militia groups threaten to secede from the rest of the country, and Nigeria is not taking such a threat lightly. Social cohesion is absent in a relationship that is built on suspicion.

*Economic Effects:* The constant kidnapping of oil and allied workers in the region, the sabotage of oil installations, and the seizure of flow stations have resulted in the underproduction of Nigeria's OPEC quota. Oil workers and companies have lost their

income and profits. Exploration equipment and other resources employed in oil-related activities are either underutilized or left idle leading to losses. The international energy market is under supplied with crude oil as a result of shortfalls in Nigerian oil output. An economic theory posits that in market equilibrium, if the demand of a product is higher than its supply, the price will naturally go up. The unsteady oil price has been linked to short supply from the Nigerian premium crude oil, known in the international market as the North Brent. In 2009, Nigerian oil output was down by one-third. The communities also are economically affected because local fishermen, property owners, and others suffer in various forms: rents are not paid to property owners; fish caught by fishermen are not sold and some fish died due to the spillage occasioned by attacks on pipelines; food supply and other economic activities are put on hold—all due to militia activities.

*Political Effects:* The involvement of certain agencies of the Nigerian government, the presidency, military, and ministers, the use of party thugs and party bigwigs, the sponsors of militia groups, and passive support of militants by the multinational oil companies have all been part of the militancy syndrome in the region. Most importantly, the Niger Delta crises have become an election campaign issue thus taking away most resources that may have been distributed to other contending national issues.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Based on our analysis, we offer the following recommendations:

Based on the political effect the crises have had on Nigerian nation and the fact that the region is an important economic base of the country which need not be neglected, we recommend the immediate depoliticization of the region. There should equally be an accelerated development of the region to improve the conditions of the people and their environment.

The conditions that make militancy attractive, especially the illegal wealth that the members accumulate through criminal activities—kidnappings, illegal crude oil lifting, illegal payment of protection fee by oil companies to militia leaders, and intimidation/exploitation of neighbors—should be removed. The drug transit routes should be policed not with corrupt officials but with agents that cannot compromise their positions. Allegations that agents or personnel are posted to such areas based on their ability to make some monetary gifts to their superiors should be investigated and dealt with according to the laws of the land.

We recommend most importantly for the moral re-orientation of youths and adults in the region who have vowed to do nothing except militia work. The re-orientation program should be based on enlightening the people on the danger their activities pose to their communities and the future generation. The multinational oil companies may never be there for centuries to come but the next generations to occupy the land will bear the brunt.

The multinational oil companies should live up to their social responsibilities just like they do in their parent countries by ensuring that they adhere to safety and ethical standards. How the Shell Development Venture Project (SDVP) responded to the oil spillage off the Coast of Louisiana in 2010, though not sufficient in the eyes of the Americans, should be followed in dealing with spillage occurring in Nigeria and other developing or underdeveloped nations. The excuse that militants caused the spillage has been used to cover

for other spillages not directly caused by militants. In fact, Nossiter (2010) has noted that oil spews from rusted and outdated pipes, lack of proper regulatory activities, inefficient maintenance and sabotage are common in the area. If the multinational oil companies live up to their social responsibilities, the smokescreen of resource control agitation will disappear and all parties will benefit greatly.

We contend that the rise of militia groups in the Niger Delta region is not necessarily caused by the agitation for resource control, but by the selfishness of the militants, government officials and agencies, multinational corporations, and indeed some community leaders in the area. In summary, if the Nigerian government, the multinational oil corporations, unemployed youths in the area, and other non-state actors who have fueled this rise in militia activities can focus on working together, normalcy will return to the region. We envisage an enhanced development and growth of the community and Nigeria in future if peace is given a chance. The oil companies will not only put their resources to full utilization but would also make great profits from their investments. We are hopeful that recommendations furnished in this analysis will lead to a win-win policy situation.

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